

Chief Pimlott's Monthly Message

April, 2011

As April comes to an end, the budget process continues to be the highest priority in Sacramento and critically important to CAL FIRE and our local government partners throughout California. There are difficult fiscal decisions yet to be made and there is an expectation that everyone will share in some level of budget savings. Budget reductions at all levels of government are placing an increasing strain on California's integrated fire protection system and we can expect to see fewer resources available for emergency response this summer. I am actively engaged in meetings with the fire service leadership to discuss these challenges and collectively develop strategies to continue meeting California's emergency response needs. I will continue to share updated information as it becomes available on these activities as well as the ongoing State budget process.



The Department continues to stay on top of budget and fiscal issues, however, April is the transition month with changing weather and fuel conditions and we must turn our focus to preparing for fire season. Despite this winter's above normal rainfall and heavy snow pack, history reminds us that California's Mediterranean climate can produce weather and fuel conditions that lead to large and damaging fires. This Sunday is the beginning of Wildfire Awareness Week across California. It is not only a time to remind homeowners to be ready for wildfires, but also a time for us to refresh our skills and ensure we are ready to respond. Unfortunately, CAL FIRE will not have the funding to support a 4th fire fighter on our engines this year. Tough fiscal times have resulted in tough fiscal decisions. Losing the 4th fire fighter is a setback; however, we can continue to respond effectively and efficiently by adjusting our tactical approach to emergencies, ordering appropriate resources and never compromising safety.

As we enter another fire season, we continue to work through the challenges of differing fire suppression policies between California and its federal partners. Last week, the CAL FIRE Academy hosted the Incident Commander's Workshop, where state and federal incident commanders discussed these issues. There is clear agreement amongst all of the Incident Commanders that differing fiscal policies and differing interpretations of agreement language can not impact their ability to order the appropriate resources, regardless of jurisdictional responsibility. CAL FIRE will not compromise its aggressive initial attack and emergency response principles. While we continue to work toward resolution of these issues at the executive level, it is critical that we maintain and strengthen the working relationships with our partners at the field level.

Thank you for your continued hard work, dedication and professionalism during these challenging times.

Ken Pimlott, Chief
Acting Director